United Nations A/67/PV.96

General Assembly
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96th plenary meeting
Friday, 23 August 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly concluded its consideration of agenda item 12 at its 42nd plenary meeting, on 28 November 2012. In order for the Assembly to take action on the draft resolution before it today, it will be necessary to reopen the consideration of agenda item 12. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen its consideration of agenda item 12?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 12 (*continued*)

Sport for peace and development

Draft resolution (A/67/L.77)

The President: It is a great honour to preside over this meeting of the General Assembly, at which we will adopt a historic draft resolution (A/67/L.77) proclaiming 6 April as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

At the outset of my remarks, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Her Excellency Ms. Isabelle Picco, Permanent Representative of Monaco, and His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Permanent Representative of Tunisia, for their tireless efforts to secure consensus on the wording of the draft resolution.

On behalf of the United Nations, allow me to welcome and extend my sincere appreciation to Mr. Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and to pay tribute to the broad legacy of achievement during his 12-year tenure at the helm of the IOC, including the attainment of permanent observer status at the United Nations, in 2009. For his distinguished contributions to the world of sport and beyond, we owe him a big debt of gratitude.

Last, but certainly not least, I am proud to acknowledge the presence of my nation's favourite son, the world's number-one men's tennis player, Mr. Novak Djokovic. His accomplishments on the court have been widely recognized. But more importantly, I believe one can draw inspiration from his personality and strength of character, his steadfastness of purpose and his fortitude to persevere. Allow me to use this opportunity to congratulate him once more on having received the Arthur Ashe Humanitarian of the Year award in recognition of his charitable work and the role he plays as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador. We look forward to following his remarkable career for many more years to come.

Sport's significance for the improvement of an individual's character and a society's welfare traces its origins back to the very dawn of our civilizations — to pharaonic Egypt and ancient China. It was the classical Greeks, however, who began to place sport at the very centre of their identity, establishing the Olympic Games some two and a half millenniums ago. The quadrennial celebration of the springtime of humankind, as it has been called, gave participants the opportunity to reach

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for greatness and to achieve their *aristeia* — their finest moment. Victors' heads were adorned with olive wreaths and red ribbons were tied around their hands to symbolize the banishment of weapons from the Olympics.

Those rituals were performed out of respect for the command of the Oracle at Delphi to practise peace through sport, codified through the law of *ekecheiria*, or sacred truce, which enabled athletes and spectators not only to travel to the Games safely, but forbade anyone to make war during the time they were taking place. The Olympic creed was inspired by the words of the Greek philosopher Epictetus:

> "the most important thing in the Olympics is not winning, but taking part; the essential thing in life is not victory, but contesting well and nobly".

To this very day, that immortal phrase represents the true essence of the Olympic spirit.

In many ways, sport is an embodiment of humankind's most valiant characteristics. It requires perseverance and discipline, engendering the principles of personal integrity, fair play and honourable competition, and inspiring us to push ourselves beyond limits, in Lord Tennyson's unforgettable verse, "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." I believe those words frame the universal values of sport, which in contemporary times the United Nations, together with the IOC, has sought to promote.

In 1993, the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/11, which called for the observance of a truce during the Games, intending not only to halt hostilities between belligerents but also to strengthen international efforts to promote peace and reconciliation among Member States. In 2010, at the High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (see A/65/PV.3), which was held at United Nations Headquarters, Heads of State and Government adopted landmark resolution 65/1, which acknowledged sport as a powerful tool in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Across the globe, sport programmes have been used to deliver HIV/AIDS prevention messages, help curb obesity rates, promote children's and maternal health and further gender equality. The draft resolution before the Assembly today builds upon those initiatives, in recognition of the fact that sport has a unique power to attract, mobilize and inspire people around the world.

As the General Assembly takes further steps to define the post-2015 agenda, I hope that the values inherent in sport will inform our deliberations on how to define the sustainable development goals. I would like to extend an appeal to Member States to come together at this critical moment and fulfil the tasks set by world leaders in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, directing the world on the path of sustainable development.

In establishing this International Day, let us pay tribute to the great legends of the past whose athletic achievements, character and moral fortitude have earned them a place of distinction in the pantheon of Olympic glory — champions such as Jesse Owens, who defied fascist ideology through his stunning victory in Berlin in 1936. Let us also honour our contemporary heroes and the virtues they personify. They ignite the sentiments of hope and possibility, reminding us of the splendid potential of humankind. And let us express deep esteem for the para-athletes who, in their quest for sporting distinction, are bravely defying disabilities and defeating negative stereotypes.

Sport can be a powerful handmaiden for peace and reconciliation. It can bring us closer through a shared celebration of achievements of universal appeal and attraction. Ethnic, religious and economic divisions fall by the wayside, along with prejudice, fear and misunderstanding.

In the words of the greatest living statesman, Nelson Mandela, a heroic figure whose political legacy and moral weight has left a lasting mark on our times,

> "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire and unite people in a way that little else does."

For young and old, male and female, rich and poor — every match, every competition represents a new opportunity to triumph. The stadium, the swimming pool, the dusty local pitch — such sites are transformed into places where greatness is within reach for all, where purity of endeavour is on full display and where any individual's abilities can be seen and admired without reservation. In effortlessly throwing asunder all human barriers, sport is indeed the world's universal language.

I now give the floor to the representative of Monaco to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.77.

Ms. Picco (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): By designating us as co-facilitators to conduct the consultations that

have led today to the General Assembly's impending declaration of an International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, you, Mr. President, did the Permanent Representative of Tunisia and me the honour of recognizing the contribution of the Group of Friends for Sport for Development and Peace to the work of the Organization. Like you, Sir, and many delegations, Tunisia and Monaco are convinced of the power of sport to contribute to the realization of our shared aspirations.

Before formally introducing the draft resolution, I would like to make the following correction to it. I will continue in English, as that was the language in which the text was submitted for printing and introduction.

(*spoke in English*)

Paragraph 5 should read as follows:

> "Also requests the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of States and the organizations of the United Nations system."

(*spoke in French*)

It is my honour, on behalf of the sponsors listed in document A/67/L.77 and the additional sponsors, which will be announced before its adoption, to introduce the draft resolution entitled "International Day of Sport for Development and Peace".

As you, Mr. President, said, since 1993 sport has been on the agenda of the General Assembly as a means of achieving a more peaceful and better world. The appeal launched by the General Assembly every two years to Member States to observe the Olympic Truce is part of the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. Sport transcends borders, bringing together men, women, young people and older people — of all countries, all cultures and all ages — around universal values, such as respect for others, tolerance, humility and equality. Reconciliation through sport in countries in crisis or emerging from conflict now exists and should be increased because it offers prospects for peace and inclusion. At a time when we are endeavouring to breathe a final political breath into achieving the Millennium Development Goals, every effort deserves be encouraged. Since the fifty-eighth session, the General Assembly has recognized sport as a means of promoting education, health, development and peace.

In the draft resolution before us, we wanted to link sports to physical activity, a central element of good health and well-being. In fact, physical activity allows us to reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases, for example, and other illnesses.

Among the many international days proclaimed by the United Nations, none has been on sports. We have now filled that void, and now, every 6 April, we will have an opportunity to continue the spirit of the first Olympic Games of the modern era, held in Athens in 1896. Of course, the purpose of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace is not only devoted to professional sports; it is also seeks to pay tribute to sports in general, which epitomizes both the noble values that we all aspire to, including surpassing ourselves.

The success of its annual celebration will be especially poignant because it relies on a number of initiatives and activities undertaken by all sport partners. In that regard, let me recognize in particular the importance of activities conducted and promoted by the Office on Sport for Development and Peace since its inception in 2001.

In our work, we will count on the wholehearted support of the International Olympic Committee and the International Paralympic Committee, symbols of a movement that defends an ideal of human progress and which cooperates already in a substantial way with the Organization through a number of partnerships, the latest being the holding of the third edition of the International Forum on Sport for Peace and Development.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/67/L.77.

Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolution, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I give the floor to the representative of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): Thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to make a short statement on the draft resolution on the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (A/67/L.77). Papua New Guinea welcomes the draft resolution.

Sporting activities bring together peoples at all levels, including different groups, nationalities and

countries, to share challenges and develop bonds of friendship and promote tolerance and understanding. The Olympic Games, World Cup soccer, regional games and other sporting activities, for example, bring a sense of unity and friendship among competitors and nationalities. International sports also enable people to know and understand other peoples and cultures.

In the case of Papua New Guinea, we are a country of great contrasts. We have a population of approximately 7 million people, with hundreds of different tribes and ethnic groups with their own unique cultures and traditions. We are also in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for having the largest number of languages — more than 800.

Such a contrast brings tough challenges to our Government to try to instil a sense of unity among all of our people for peaceful coexistence among the many different tribal, ethnic and regional groupings in our country. Disputes between individuals often result in tribal and ethnic clashes because of the diversity of the groups that make up the country. However, when Papua New Guinea plays regional or other international sports, the entire country is united. Great patriotism and national unity are evident among the people. Tribal or ethnic conflicts are forgotten as everyone is united in their support for the national team.

Papua New Guinea will host the regional South Pacific Games in July 2015. The Games will bring together sportsmen and sportswomen from all the 23 Pacific Island countries and territories to compete in all forms of sport, including athletics, football, rugby, tennis and other sports. In preparation for the Games, our Government has invested more than $18 million this year to upgrade sporting facilities, which reflects our commitment to funding sports as a channel towards development and peace in our country.

Undertaking regular sporting activities also enables people to stay fit and healthy. It means less risk of developing an unhealthy lifestyle and its associated diseases. Excelling in sports also brings great fame and wealth to teams and individuals. Sporting icons in boxing, golf — today we have a tennis icon present with us — and other sports inspire young people to take up sports with dreams of emulating their idols.

Again, Papua New Guinea strongly supports the draft resolution before us as a means of promoting development and peace through sports.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.77, entitled "International Day of Sport for Development and Peace".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Saijin Zhang (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to tho ? delegations listed in document A/67/L.77, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Australia, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Iraq, Israel, Jamaica, Montenegro, Morocco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Switzerland and Turkmenistan.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt without a vote draft resolution A/67/L.77, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/67/L.77, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 67/296).

The President: Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of position following the adoption of the resolution, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): The United States is pleased to have joined the consensus on today's resolution on the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (resolution 67/296). We also welcome the presence in the Hall today of members of the international sport community, in particular Mr. Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee, and Mr. Larry Probst, President of the United States Olympic Committee.

The United States is home to a vast array of sporting communities and activities. Americans of every identity and background participate in sports, from backyard play and little leagues all the way to professional and international competition. That

diversity and universality of participation is what makes sport the opportunity to advance development and peace, as noted in today's resolution.

The United States delegation is particularly pleased to see that the resolution emphasizes the importance of safeguarding human dignity without any discrimination whatsoever. Part of what makes sport so important is that it promotes inclusiveness and brings together people of different ages, races, religions, social status, abilities, sexual orientations and gender identities. Sport cuts through all segments of society and is instrumental in empowering people of diverse backgrounds and identities while fostering tolerance and respect for all people, no matter what they look like, where they worship or whom they love.

At the recent Forum on Sport for Peace and Development, co-hosted by the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee in early June, there were many examples cited of sport being used to promote positive social change, development and conflict resolution. The United States recognizes that sport diplomacy is a valuable means to strengthen cultural relations among nations. Through our SportsUnited programme, thousands of people from more than 100 countries have participated in sports and cultural exchanges.

The further use of sport as an educational tool has long been underestimated. With the introduction of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, we can further extend the good work that happens around development and peace through sport, provided we build upon the universality that lies at the core of sport's appeal to the citizens of all our countries.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union, who wishes to make a statement following the adoption of resolution 67/296.

Mr. Vrailas (European Union): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the European Union and its member States. I warmly welcome the presence here in this Hall of the President of the International Olympic Committee, Mr. Jacques Rogge.

The European Union and its member States welcome the establishment of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, 6 April, which commemorates the revival of the modern Olympic Games, and would like to reaffirm their commitment to multilateral action to promote sports and their importance for development and peace.

Sport is an important means to promote inclusiveness for people independently of their age, race, religion or belief, social status, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. It can bring people together, help overcome cultural, linguistic and other barriers and contribute to the fight against all forms of discrimination.

The European Union and its member States also acknowledge the important role of the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace and its work in that regard.

The European Union and its member States would also like to reiterate their position concerning the proclamation of international days, years and decades, which must be consistent with the international guidelines we have collectively agreed in Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67, which were reaffirmed twice, in General Assembly resolutions 53/199 and 61/185. While joining the consensus on the resolution just adopted (resolution 67/296), we will continue to actively defend respect for the Economic and Social Council guidelines on future proclamations and give priority to efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the work of the General Assembly, in support of its revitalization.

Ms. Hewanpola (Australia): Australia is proud to support the resolution adopted today (resolution 67/296) proclaiming the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace. As a proud sporting nation, we are committed to the ideals of sport and its potential to inspire, unite and promote understanding across language, cultural and geographic divides.

The declaration of the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace helps to promote the potential of sport, its contribution to education, health and physical fitness and the development of other important life skills, including confidence, self-esteem, teamwork, cooperation, social interaction, communication, tolerance and peaceful conflict resolution. Ultimately, sport has the potential to help us reach our development goals, to promote understanding and to achieve sustainable peace. Today's resolution makes clear the important role of the United Nations in furthering those ideals.

We thank you for this initiative, Mr. President, and we celebrate the power of sport to promote social inclusion and to bring together people of differing ages, genders, races, cultures, faiths and status, including

sexual orientation and gender identity. As they say, sport provides a level playing field where all participants are equal, an ideal that is to be promoted throughout the world.

Mr. Calvo Calvo (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica would like to thank the co-facilitators, the delegations of Monaco and Tunisia, for all their efforts and congratulate them on their successful work. My country would also like to welcome Mr. Jacques Rogge, President of the International Olympic Committee, and the great tennis player, Mr. Djokovic, who were present with us today for the adoption of this important resolution (resolution 67/296).

Costa Rica was proud to have sponsored the initiative to proclaim 6 April as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace. Our country has been working for several years on the development of policies that allow us to use sport as a means of promoting a more inclusive, supportive and healthy society. We are therefore confident that the proclamation of this Day will motivate us to continue our work, with the goal of strengthening our aspirations for peaceful coexistence and sustainable human development through economic, social, environmental and cultural development. We would therefore stress that sport is an intrinsically holistic activity, as it is one of the best contributions to comprehensive human development and, alongside music and the other arts, promotes the joy of learning together.

Costa Rica strongly believes in promoting human rights as a preventive measure. Just as human rights education has a double impact on the empowerment of people and respect for the rights of others, we recognize the potential of sport to serve as a universal language that helps build the values of respect, understanding, diversity and tolerance among human beings, as well as to promote peace and development.

Over the past year, Costa Rica has carried out several activities focused on sport. We are co-chairs of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace at the United Nations in Geneva, through which we organized various activities focused on people with disabilities during the most recent session of the Human Rights Council and on the importance of physical activity for public health at the World Health Assembly.

In March, we hosted the tenth Central American Games, held in San José. During the Games, we headed up the founding of the first Central American commission for peace through sport, made up of all the Olympic Committees of Central America.

From 9 to 11 September, we will host the first Global Youth Summit, jointly organized by the Government of Costa Rica and the International Telecommunication Union, in which sport as a tool for physical and mental health, in addition to its usefulness in protecting the rights of children, will be one of the central issues discussed.

All those activities and projects show that our Government, led by President Laura Chinchilla Miranda, continues to follow our decades-old policy focused on strengthening the civil tradition of our country and committed to development and education in their broadest sense.

We therefore invite all Member States to take concrete actions to make sport a fundamental right that generates social transformation and is accessible to all people, regardless of age or social status, in the pursuit of a more full, healthy, free and peaceful life.

Mr. Roet (Israel): Israel is pleased to have sponsored this resolution (resolution 67/296) and recognizes the fundamental role sport can play in promoting peace and development. Sport is woven into the fabric of Israeli society, and we are particularly proud that, in many international sporting events, Jewish and Arab Israelis participate side by side, without bias or discrimination.

We thank Mr. Wilfried Lemke, the United Nations Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, for his devoted efforts to promote tolerance and understanding. We are honoured that he has visited Israel on various occasions and participated in the "Sport as a mediator between cultures" conference, co-hosted by Israel and Germany with the support of UNESCO. Mr. Lemke's Office has been instrumental in promoting programmes such as Sports for Life and a running partnership between Israel, Jordan and Germany that brings together Jewish and Arab youth to play soccer and build understanding.

We also applaud this resolution for recognizing the valuable role of the International Paralympic Committee. We are inspired by the Paralympic values of courage, determination, inspiration and equality. Paralympic athletes push the limits of their physical abilities and, in doing so, break down countless boundaries.

At the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, the International Olympic Committee failed to uphold the universal values of the Olympics. Israel remembers in honour the many Jewish athletes who were barred from competing in the Games in Nazi Germany. We also recall the Munich Olympic massacre in 1972, when 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team were taken hostage and eventually killed.

The delegation of Israel supports the resolution's call to place sports at the service of humankind and without any discrimination whatsoever. We interpret that to include, inter alia, race, religion and nationality, sexual orientation and gender identity. By supporting today's resolution, we can ensure that the tragedies of the past will serve as a clear lesson for the future.

Mr. Adamov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus welcomes the adoption of resolution 67/296. We participated in the drafting of the resolution and sponsored it.

We believe the contribution of sport to peace to be a very important one. In order to achieve peace, sport needs to be constantly supported, with many efforts by States and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Sport should not be used for political purposes that run counter to the goal of civilized and friendly relations among States. Such actions are at odds not only with the principles of sport but also the spirit and letter of the Olympic Charter. We see such actions as potentially destabilizing.

Belarus would like to see friendly multilateral relationships in sport, and so we must be more active in defending sport. The United Nations and the IOC must be more active in doing so, as must others. It is important that the United Nations adopt cooperation mechanisms that can be used to protect and defend the spirit of the Olympics, and not allow certain States to engage in discriminatory actions that run counter to that spirit.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of agenda item 12?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.